EXPERTS SHARE PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

DSMC Learning Forum

Mary-jo Hall

The Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) recently hosted a Learning Forum, where different teams/divisions shared process improvements, and a panel of experts modeled asking "tedious" questions to reach process issues. The panel of experts included Dr. Myron Tribus, nationally-known advocate of quality education; Mr. David P. Langford, an educator known internationally for putting the Dr. W. Edwards Deming philosophy of profound knowledge into the public school system; and DSMC Commandant, Brig Gen (Sel.) Claude M. Bolton, Jr., USAF.

Photos by Richard Mattox

Brig Gen (Sel.) Claude M. Bolton, Jr., USAF, DSMC Commandant, and Dr. Myron Tribus.

Some of the presentations were by cross-functional teams that recently completed the three-day Total Quality Learning (TQL) workshop. These teams used the seven-step, problem-solving method to solve a DSMC problem. The seven steps fit into the Deming Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle as shown in figure 1.

The teams used the Quality Improvement Story (QIS) technique to report process improvements. The QIS is a visual communications and marketing tool to display the improvement process. The format follows the PDSA cycle and displays the date so anyone can "see" the purpose of the improvement, who is doing it, and why and how it is being done. The QIS is a logical blueprint and a tool for getting feedback from all stakeholders.

Other DSMC team members who previously attended TQL used the same methodology to demonstrate complex improvements/projects. Some improvements included:

—Captain Dean F. Osgood, USAF, used the quality tools and techniques to reduce scheduling coordination time for PMC 94-1 by more than 100 hours and to complete the scheduling

Dr. Hall is Special Assistant for Quality, Office of the Commandant, at the Defense Systems Management College.

FIGURE 1. Plan-Do-Study-Act

PLAN:	1. Define the system (who are team members; what is the purpose; why was this improvement opportunity selected over others, etc.).
	2. Study the situation (define the process).
	3. Analyze the causes (collect data).
DO:	4. Develop and implement a theory for improvement (What hypothesis (prediction) can you make about the results?).
STUDY:	5. Study and analyze the results (use data).
ACT:	6. Standardize the improvement (ensure everyone knows about the improvement to the process and is implementing the new process).
	7. Decide on future improvements *(repeat the PDSA cycle).*

From left: Mr. David P. Langford, Quality Consultant, Total Quality Learning, Inc.; Dr. Benjamin C. Rush, Dean, Faculty Division, DSMC.

process in one and a half months — a 50 percent time reduction!

—LTC Alan M. Kimball, USA, and his resource management team have used quality tools and techniques to design and implement a product cost accounting system for DSMC, to improve the contracting process (including participation by Fort Belvoir, Va., support agencies), improve the utilization and management of overtime work, and to improve satisfaction of department customers for travel, product costing and budgeting services. Major accomplishments from the contracting process were reduced processing time and reduced prompt payment penalties by more than 95 percent.

—Major Constance A. King, USAF, used the structured problem-solving methodology and the quality planning tools in the classroom to facilitate a learning environment and, also, in her consulting practice. Major King explained how she had to use the data-gathering and analysis tools frequently enough to accustom herself with them. However, after practice use and observing the results, she was comfortable "letting the data decide what tool was appropriate."

The benefits of using a structured, problem-solving methodology to improve a process includes having a clear sense of purpose for the improvement and knowing where it "fits" in the system, having a strategy and a theory for proceeding, using data to make all decisions and involving as many stakeholders as possible.

The benefits of using the visual storyboard to communicate the improvement process include being able to see the story at any time, reliance on data displayed graphically, and being able to obtain feedback from those not directly related to the improvement team. The DSMC is starting to use these techniques to identify inefficiencies, recognize nonvalue added work, and to make and report improvements.

From left: DSMC's Edward Hirsch, Provost and Deputy Commandant; Gibson G. LeBoeuf, Navy Chair, Executive Institute; Captain Daniel E. Brown, USN, Dean, Program Management Education Division; and Dr. Adelia E. Ritchie, Dean, Research, Consulting and Information Division.